

WILSON'S PRICING OF STEEL AT PLANTS

President Will Not Attempt to Set Any Uniform Price.

76 RATE FOR PUBLIC

Executive Passes Entire Afternoon at Trade Commission's Offices.

Special Dispatch to The Sun.

WASHINGTON, Aug. 22.—President Wilson spent the afternoon at the offices of the Federal Trade Commission, where he conferred with Commissioners Davies and Oliver and the experts who have been in charge of the commission's investigation into the costs of coal, steel and copper.

The President called into consultation David Wing, the coal expert; F. W. Walker, the steel expert, and L. H. Manney, in charge of the copper investigation. He went over all of the cost figures gathered and the deductions drawn therefrom.

For one thing it was brought out, it was known that the cost of steel production has been found to vary so much at different plants as to make it virtually impossible with any justice to fix one price for all. It is expected that the President in a brief time will issue an executive order with regard to steel prices, but unlike the coal schedule, the policy of the steel will be a cost fixing schedule for the steel plants rather than by producing districts.

Under this plan the Government when it contracts for a certain amount of steel plate from the Bethlehem company, for example, will order these plates to be delivered at the reasonable market price in this schedule with reasonable profit, which the Government will also fix.

Prices for Public.

Another point which it is understood was pretty definitely decided to-day at the conference with the President was the virtual impossibility of fixing a price for the public. The policy of the Government along this line, it is understood, will be to make the production cost for each plant open to all and to rely upon this to bring down prices for private purchasers, who it is believed will be unlikely to pay more than a reasonable profit over such cost figures.

The length of the President's visit strengthened the opinion that drastic action would be taken soon in regard to the price of metals as a corollary to yesterday's action on coal. It would not be surprising to see the whole price fixing program taken out of the hands of the War Industries Board, which has been embarrassed by the matter ever since its creation, and placed in the hands of the Federal Trade Commission, which has been overhauled and covered the cost of production under present conditions.

Coal Costs Increased.

Costs have increased to far greater extent than is generally realized, they assert. A West Virginia operator admitted to-day a comparison of the prices paid by his company for actual production of supplies during 1914 and 1917. The increase in price range from 15 to 400 per cent.

Another operator said his supply cost had increased from a trifling more than 25 cents per ton to 125 cents per ton. The cost for the first seven months of this year. Labor costs have also largely increased, and the cost problem is changing weekly.

While the coal operators carefully refrained from taking any action which would seem to indicate they planned to force their policy, they complained bitterly in private of the injustice of some of the prices and also of the uncertainty in which they were being kept with regard to the Government's policy.

The conferences were continued to-day, and it was decided to call a meeting of all bituminous coal producers to discuss the problem of the coal industry.

The members of the executive committee of the National Association of Coal Operators met to-day at the hotel and considered the problem of the coal industry.

It is likely, however, if the coal operators resort to any drastic labor cuts that the Government will meet the situation constantly by a seizure of their mines.

It was said to-day that the costs worked out by the Trade Commission had included prospective advances to the mine workers, and that no retaliatory measures of this kind would be justified or tolerated.

The anthracite situation still remains unsettled. The expectation is that action in fixing prices in the anthracite field will be taken shortly, and that it will result in a material reduction to consumers in some cases.

The President has asked President Garfield of Williams College to be the coal administrator. While President Garfield is in the hospital, it is understood here that he will accept.

MEDIATION DECLINED.

Cumberland Valley Coal Operators Make Wage Concessions.

MIDDELBORO, Ky., Aug. 22.—It was understood to-day that mediation was declined by the Cumberland Valley coal operators to consider the demands of striking miners in District No. 19, United Mine Workers of America, embracing southeastern Kentucky and northern Tennessee.

Representatives of the operators refused to discuss the subject, saying they would only discuss it after the strike was called off.

The strike was called August 11. According to reports, 25,000 men are affected.

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